

# Why Do We Believe in God? #1

*Why Do We Believe in God?*

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Tonight, the question is why do we believe in God and it would be a fair question to ask. Why even bother with such a question as that in a group of people that would probably almost unanimously say, "We do believe in God?" Why is it, then, that we would address that question? Well, on a personal level, it's no secret that there are professing Christians that are often under the siege of doubt and uncertain struggling, wondering why it is. They feel as though they are in darkness and they need assurance as they deal with the question, "Why do we believe in God?" Some young people born in Christian homes wonder whether they simply believe because their parents believe and they want something more than a borrowed faith. They want it to be real for themselves. They want answers that satisfy their own minds and something more than simply, "Mom and dad told me so." So they want an answer to the question, "Why do we believe in God?" Here's what I want to see: so often when the question or the proofs of people trying to prove the existence of God, they go into a lot of complex philosophical arguments that are going by names that are hard to pronounce and reasons that are even harder to remember and I've personally not found those things to be too persuasive over the years. What we're going to talk about tonight and next week are answers to that question that are scriptural, that are compelling, and that are easily remembered. In fact, the answers to why we believe in God are so simple that a child can understand them. At the same time, those same answers are so profound that the richest scriptural theologians could spend a lifetime and not exhaust the meaning of what is being said in the things that we're going to look at tonight. We simply, as mature believers, cannot plumb the depths of what we have to look at tonight. So I'm really excited about this.

Now, before I go any further, I want to deal with something upfront. You and I know that there are lots of atheists around that write lots of book and make a lot of money contesting everything that we'll say here tonight. Now, I just want you to know, I acknowledge that, but I'm not going to spend any time really refuting what they have to say; I mention them only to say that I'm not worried about their rants against what we believe and you shouldn't be either. Opposing opinions are no barrier to a confident belief in the reality of a living God and I want you to turn as we start, to Matthew 16. We kind of alluded to this a couple of weeks ago on Sunday but I want to spend just a little bit more time on this issue. We openly recognize, openly acknowledge, that there are people that are going to do directly, vociferously, heatedly contest everything that we have to say

tonight. We're not worried about that. That reality of unbelief was present even during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus.

Look at Matthew 16:13. I find this so very helpful as I try to walk through the midst of a world that is antagonistic to what I believe. These things from Matthew 16 kind of help frame our thinking in a healthy way, I believe. Matthew 16:13, "Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi and He was asking His disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" Now, here's what I want you to see in that right there, right in the middle of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, is that there were conflicting opinions about him. There were totally misguided thoughts about who Jesus Christ was and it was in direct opposition to who Christ really was and it was in direct opposition to what he was teaching his disciples to believe about him. So we're faced with this and he says, "Who do you say that I am?" Realize that the conflicting opinions did not consign his disciples to a mental hell of uncertainty about the reality of who he was. Even though there is opposition to what we're going to say and what the Bible says about the living God, that does not mean that you have to live in doubt; it doesn't mean that you are excluded from living in certainty even as the most humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is confidence, there is assurance, there is clarity, and there is certainly available to us as we contemplate these questions of such momentous magnitude.

Look at what happens as we go on in verse 15. He said, "Who do you say that I am?" There's a personal accountability to that and Jesus says, "Okay, that's what the crowds say. The crowds say Jeremiah, Elijah, another prophet. Let's forget about the crowd. Who do you say that I am?" And he puts it and pinpoints it on their own heart and, in essence, he says, "You make up your own mind despite the conflicting voices." And look at what they say in response in verse 16, "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Peter came to the right conclusion even though the majority had it all wrong. How could that happen? How could a fisherman get it right when the leading religious scholars of the day were in absolute opposition to Christ? How could that be?

Verse 17, "Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" Now mark this, Jesus says, "Peter, you're blessed." It's a word that means, "Peter, you are the privileged recipient of divine favor. God has blessed you, Peter. God has given you favor that has not been shown to others." And how is it that Peter could know the truth about Christ in the midst of all of those mistaken views and in the midst of all the unbelief? How is it that you and I can have clarity and certainty and confidence in our Christian faith even though it so actively mocked and ridiculed in everything around us? How is that? It's because God had revealed truths to Peter and he has revealed truth to us as well. Mark this: you could say that Peter believed in Christ as the Son of the living God because God had spoken. God had revealed this to Peter. God had made it known. It was something outside of Peter that gave veracity to the content of his statement that Christ was the Son of the living God.

Now, what we're going to see as we go forward here for the rest of tonight and for next week as well, is that the Bible shows us that God has spoken in a multiplicity of places. God has made himself known in many places, in many ways, in a way that is incontestable proof that he is real and that he is a living God. He has spoken in multiple ways that we have to take into account and so we're going to consider five ways that God has made himself known. We'll look at three of them tonight and two of them next week, but we want to strengthen our confidence in what we believe. We want to be confident believers that even in the face of an assault, an atheistic assault against us, we can stand firm and know what we believe and why we believe it and ultimately also to understand why it is that they reject the very things that are so evident to us. The whole point of this is about being confident believers. I'm not so concerned tonight to try to persuade a skeptic as I am to help you as a believer in Christ see the undeniable clarity with which God has spoken and made himself known. That's the idea. It's to strengthen believers more than it is to persuade a skeptic because if we can start from a position of strength, then we're all going to be better equipped to deal with it when it comes across us in personal relationships or in whatever we see.

So, why do we believe in God? First reason: we believe in God because he has spoken in creation. He has spoken in creation and all five of these points are going to start with the letter "C" so it's going to be really easy to remember and I, honestly, multiple times a month, I just run through these things in my mind and just rehearse them over and over again. God has spoken in creation. Turn back to Psalm 8, for a good place for us to start. Psalm 8, beginning in verse 1, "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" God, you have displayed your splendor in the skies above us.

Verse 3, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the Son of man that You care for him?" Now at a real basic level, David is simply looking up at the heavens and saying, "God, you have displayed your glory in the sky above me. I look and I see the moon and the stars that you have ordained. I can't calculate the incomparable distance they are from me. I can't calculate the greatness of the order that is in the skies. I can't calculate the greatness of the fact that these stars hang in space suspended in air. I don't understand all of that but I see the work of your hand when I look at that and consider it. It's right there. It's plain and it's obvious."

Turn over to Psalm 19. As a shepherd in Israel in a black, dark night sky, David would have had multiple opportunities to reflect on the glory of the heavens and he sees the stars undiminished by city lights and so the brightness and the thousands of stars in front of him twinkling like diamonds above his head, he reflects on that and in Psalm 19:1, he says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard." In other words, this is a silent testimony but it's a testimony nonetheless. He says, "Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world."

Now look, any man anywhere can go outside and look up into the sky and see ongoing testimony to the reality of the living God. You observe the heavens, you contemplate the incomprehensible magnitude of the universe, you contemplate its impeccable order and all of that points to the reality of a powerful God who established it by his wisdom. You just go out and with a certain level of common sense observe these things and then you think. You see the sun by day, you see the moon by night. You see a kaleidoscope of stars in the heavens and you contemplate the fact that we can calculate the movements of the heavenly bodies to the minute. With utter precision this universe revolves around itself and moves in perfect order in a way that is mathematically precise and constant. That kind of magnitude and that kind of precision speak to the reality of a living God in a way that is incontestable. Now, not only that. Not only that, it's not just that we contemplate this and think about this on a one night basis, understand that any time you go outside, there is an ongoing testimony that is saying these same things. God is never silent in his creation. This creation is an ongoing testimony.

Look at verse 4 again of Psalm 19, actually verse 2, I'm sorry. "Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge." Minute by minute, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, there hasn't been a moment that has gone by that everyone under the sky has not been the recipient of God's testimony to his own existence because he has imprinted it in creation in an utterly undeniable way.

Now, hear me on this: the fact that men take it for granted does not diminish the testimony. The fact that people ignore it, the fact that people don't pay attention to it, does nothing to diminish the value and the certainty of the testimony of his existence that God has imprinted into the very order and fabric of creation. It is no excuse. It is no argument against this testimony in creation that men ignore it, that men don't see it, anymore than it's a valid reason when you're talking to someone if they stick their fingers in their ears and go, "Blah, blah, blah, I can't hear you." That doesn't mean that you're speaking with a lack of clarity. The fact that it's not received is a testimony against the person there, it's against the man on the receiving end, it's no diminishment of the testimony of God on the speaking end. This is clear.

It reminds me of a little thing that happened in our church in California with my youngest daughter Marisa. She was about three or four in church with us. We had our kids with us during the church service and enjoyed that and the pastor, Pastor John MacArthur, was preaching on something about children and he said that children are rebellious and stubborn. Somehow in her youth, she picked up on that. She said, and she had a frown on her face, and she said, "He just called me stubborn. I'm not going to listen to him anymore." That's a true story. That's exactly what happened. Now look, I'm sure there are tapes of that message available. Pastor MacArthur was not speaking in stuttering. He wasn't hard to understand. The fact that Marisa had her hands over her ears did not diminish the clarity with which he spoke at all. It is the exact same way when we calculate the way God has revealed himself in creation.

Now, here's the question someone might ask, you might say: is God's statement in creation, is that a sufficient reason to believe in God? Standing alone, is that enough

reason to believe in God? Well, turn over to the book of Romans 1. I want you to think about it. I want you to think about it this way. I want to help you get around the stubborn refusal of atheists to believe and to view this all from God's perspective. You see, what we're doing here tonight, we're not trying to please atheists with what we say, we are simply trying to see what God says about these things, give God a voice in this without having it polluted or corrupted by the arguments of atheists that oppose it. What does God say about this testimony in creation?

Look at 1:18, the Apostle Paul says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." First of all, Paul says, "This is evident to them even though they deny it. It is evident within them, within the sphere of their own mind and thinking. This is evident to them because God made it evident to them."

Verse 20, there is so much I want to say here tonight. I've got a traffic jam just before my tongue with 10,000 things wanting to come out all at once. Verse 20, "For since the creation of the world," you see, there it is in creation, "His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." Listen, what does God think about the way he has spoken in creation? He says it is so sufficient and it is so clear that men are without excuse to claim not to know him or understand him just in light of creation. Denying the existence of God in the face of this creation is sufficient grounds for eternal judgment. That's how clear it is. God will judge men simply on this basis alone and say, "Your claims to be an atheist, your claims that it wasn't clear, God as the Judge is going to rule those objections as out of order and dismiss them as carrying no weight in the tribunal of his justice."

So is this clear enough? Is this accurate enough? Well, let's put it this way: men are going to be eternally damned for denying it and the wrath of God is upon them right now for their stubborn refusal to listen. It is no excuse to put your hands over your ears and your hands over your eyes and to deny the things that are as plain as the nose on your face. So we as Christians, as we understand this and as we look at it from God's perspective, we have to be strong and courageous and we have to be adamant that we're not talking about a probability case here that maybe it is, maybe it's not and that's one of the things I hate about evidential apologetics is the idea that you're just trying to build up a probability case for the existence of God. No! No! No! No! Out on the suggestion of such a farce! God has spoken with authority and we especially as his people but mankind in general, we do not have the prerogative or the right to diminish that and to lower what God says is sufficient to judge men, to lower it down to some kind of probability argument that can be debated with people who do not believe. We don't have that prerogative and so we need to be clear and we need to be adamant that it is clear, it is undeniable and you will

be judged for denying it in the face of it. "Not only that, my atheist friend," you can say, "I don't know why you're going with me because your own conscience agrees with me. You're denying the testimony of your own conscience when you're arguing with me about this point." And we just have to be very clear and straightforward in our thinking about it. Every man is on notice that there is a powerful God whom he should seek out. If you've ever been out on a country road in the middle of the night, think about it this way: creation's testimony is like a big billboard with flashing neon lights on the side of an isolated road on a dark night. There is no excuse for missing it. That's how clear and obvious and undeniable it is.

So when we ask the question, "Why do we believe in God?" we start with that which we can point to objectively outside ourselves to the realm of creation. We say, "Yeah, I understand scientists scoff at this, the entertainment industry scoffs at this, the professors in college scoff at this and those who have been under their influence scoff at this. I get that but, do you know what? God scoffs at their fantasy that all of this happened by a Big Bang and so that everything came out of nothing and that precision came out of an explosion." Have you ever seen a bomb go off? Have you ever seen a bomb produce order and precision? It's the exact opposite. It's utter foolishness and we need to point out and just say, "Look, the Emperor isn't wearing any clothes here. This is inexcusable."

And you have the prerogative, beloved, the prerogative and the responsibility to look at all of this, to hear what they're saying and say, "I reject that. I categorically reject the atheistic rantings of the world around me." Jesus Christ comes to you in full authority and says, "What do you say? What do you say? Who do you say that I am? What do you say to this testimony?" And you and I have to give an answer and by the grace of God, we have to humble ourselves and we have to bow our knee and say, "Lord, I believe." That is the only appropriate response to what God has done in creation. Anything else is a travesty. Anything else is to exchange wisdom for foolishness and the words that Paul uses in Romans, Paul uses words that are the same words from which we get the English word "moron." He says, "These atheistic rants, it's coming out of the mouths of foolish morons." And we need to call a spade a spade under the authority of the word of God and be faithful to our Creator and be the ones who speak up for him when no one else will and by the grace of God that's what Truth Community is going to do as long as God gives us breath, right?

Turn over to the book of Acts 14, there's something else I want you to see. Acts 14:16. Paul is speaking to some Greeks and in verse 16 he says to them, "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet," watch this in the context of what we're talking about here, "God did not leave Himself without a witness." What was that witness, Paul? "In that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." In the cycle of agriculture, in the goodness of God, there is an ongoing testimony, the faithful provision of these cycles. This doesn't occur by the force of natural processes without God being involved. This is God giving witness. The seasons are giving witness to the faithfulness of the one who created them.

Isaac Watts in his hymn, "I Sing the Almighty Power of God," there is a verse in which he says this, "I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food. He formed the creatures with his word, and then pronounced them good. Lord," listen to this, "Lord, how your wonders are displayed wherever I turn my eye, if I survey the ground I tread or gaze upon the sky." There is unending testimony. A man that lives 70 years, 70 years times 365 days, however many thousands of days that is. I won't try to do the math off the top of my head. I guess that it's somewhere around, whatever. It's a lot. I don't have my calculator here, Dan. However many days a man lives is how many days of unbroken testimony he has to the existence of God.

So why do we believe in God? We answer that question without shame, without apology: we believe in God because he has spoken clearly in creation. Now get this, watch this, beloved. I want you to think through this all the way through to what we're saying. When we say this, we are talking about something that is objective. It is outside of you. This testimony existed before you were born. Unless Christ returns quickly, it's going to exist after you are gone. When we say that God has spoken into creation, we're speaking to something that is true. If you had never been born, it has nothing to do with your personal belief. This is something that you can point a man to and say, "You think about this and you can think about this and observe this without me being around." I'm not a big fan of the hymns that say, "You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart." There is an element of truth to that but it's so subjective and it's easy to dismiss that and say, "Well, that's your personal opinion." What I want you to see is we're not talking about opinion at all here. You and I believe in God because he has spoken. Stated differently, we believe in response to God's self-disclosure, not because we made anything up. We believe because he first spoke and made himself known. That's outside of us. It's independent of our opinion.

Well, he's made himself known in a second area as well. We've looked at creation. Secondly, and you can think about creation as the macro view of things, but secondly, we can also consider the way God has made himself known in the realm of conscience. The realm of conscience. We believe in God because a universal principle of conscience operates in mankind. Now, I'm talking about something more than your individual conscience. I'm talking about the collective conscience of right and wrong that is at work in the world around us. There is a general sense of right and wrong that humanity has. Generally speaking, humans will affirm the principles, the goodness of love and kindness and generosity. Generally speaking, humans across cultures will condemn things like child murders and hypocrisy in spiritual leaders. There is a universal condemnation of those things, a universal affirmation of the good things. Now, here's the question: how is it that so many billions of people in so many different places in so many different cultures have a similar principle of conscience at work in their minds? They didn't have a common teacher in a human sense. Where does that come from?

Well, Scripture speaks to it. Look over at the book of Romans again, Romans 2, beginning in verse 14, I guess that would help. Romans 2:14, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law," they don't have the revelation of God in their hands, when they "do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in

that," watch this, we're talking about people who don't have the revelation of God in written form; they don't have the Bible, as it were, and Paul is saying that "they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them," verse 16, "on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." Paul here is speaking to the reality of conscience by which we mean conscience is a built in device that God has put into humanity that gives us a sense of right and wrong. Conscience intrinsically condemns us when we do wrong; it affirms us when we do right. Conscience is not the voice of God but it's a human faculty that God has planted in the human heart to help us recognize right and wrong in a basic sense. And when we start to think about this and realize that that principle transcends culture, transcends centuries and is expressed in laws which govern life in different kinds of society, we have to say, "Wait, where did this come from? How is it that humanity operates like that? That is utterly inexplicable from an evolutionary viewpoint."

So it's expressed through the common revulsion at things like the school murders at Connecticut. It's expressed when a pastor is exposed as a fraud and someone who has been living a double life. There is just a universal revulsion and condemnation of that. Going further and being more personal about it, it's expressed through the feelings of guilt that come when you and I do wrong in our personal lives. Now look, man wouldn't seek to put something like that in himself because it's a restraint on his actions. Get this: man wouldn't invent a conscience that condemned him and restrained him from doing what he wants to do. Men don't act that way. It's against their interest to have it. They have a conscience almost in spite of themselves. Well, where does that come from? The Bible says that God has written his moral law on human hearts. We could say it this way, beloved: God has spoken there. God has made himself known in the realm of human conscience; that principle of conscience testifies to the existence of God.

Now, a skeptic might say, "Is that really a sufficient reason to believe in God? I don't accept that. This is intangible. You know, let's prove it scientifically." You know, their favorite mantra. Well listen, look back at Romans 2 for just a moment. Romans 2:16. I want you to see this because it's the same thing Paul said about creation. Paul said, "Men who deny the existence of God in the face of creation will be judged and they are under judgment because they are denying the obvious." Well, Paul points to the same principle in verse 16. Having just spoken about conscience he says, "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." Is conscience sufficient to believe in God? Let's look at it this way: if it's a sufficient reason to be internally judged, apparently it's good enough. From the perspective of God, that's more than adequate.

Now, watch this, think with me here, this is so pervasive and what I want you to see is that God has spoken. The book of Hebrews talks about that God has spoken in many ways and he spoke at many times. Even in our 21st century world when we don't have new revelation coming to us, in a macro sense we have unending testimony, unbroken testimony in creation all around us. In a micro sense, in the small sense, in the unseen realm, we have God speaking to us in conscience. Inside man and outside of man is ongoing, undeniable testimony to the existence and reality of God. That's why we believe



in God. It's inside and it's outside. There's no place else to go. There is no realm where you can go to get away from this ongoing testimony that God has planted in the human heart and in his creation. He has spoken there and we believe in him, not because it's something that we've made up. Not simply because it's something that we've been taught from others. We believe because God has made himself known. We're not the initiators in this, we are the ones responding when we say, "I believe in God." One writer puts it this way, he says, quote, "We all have some awareness that the sense of obligation to do good and to spurn evil reflects the will of an ultimate Lord to whom we are ultimately responsible."

Now, without just speaking in the broadest, most general terms, things that you guys all have seen and know: our society tries to destroy the function of conscience. Psychology promotes self-esteem and denies personal guilt and we don't have time to delve into the significance of that attack, but through repeated sin and indifference, individuals can dull their conscience and make it easier to pursue sin. But watch this, beloved, and think with me on this, think God's thoughts after him. You know, we get enough of this tripe crammed down our throats from the media, let's just let God speak and think after God for a while here, huh? At each step along the way, people have to suppress their inner testimony to the reality of God. They have to deny their conscience. They have to disobey it. They have to silence it. And, yeah, they can dull it and they can suppress it and make it less active but at every step along the way, they are fighting the very testimony that God has put inside the human heart that would point them to their accountability and to the reality of the one to whom we all must one day do.

So God has given a transcendent testimony in creation. He's given a transcendent testimony in conscience. I'll say it again and I'm going to say this multiple times until you're tired of hearing me say it: it has nothing to do with what you think or believe about any of it. This is utterly objective testimony outside of you. If we were all wiped out in a bomb right now, nothing would change about the ongoing testimony. It does not depend upon what you believe about it and try as they may, men will never finally silence the voice of God in these areas.

Now, creation and conscience as clearly as they speak, they can only serve a limited function. They can only point us to the existence, the reality of God, something about his nature and attributes as we see the power of creation around us, but they are not enough to save a soul. They are not enough to reveal the fullness of God's character. They are not enough to show us the way out of sin when we have disobeyed God. You see, creation and conscience are designed to make a search for a fuller knowledge of God. They put us on notice that there is a transcendent being; that there is a transcendent God who has a moral order to things and then they are designed to put us on notice to make us search. And if men would search, if they would listen, if they would humble themselves, which they won't apart from a work of grace in their hearts, they'd find a third reason to believe in God because God has also spoken in the Canon. God has spoken in the Canon of Scripture. God has spoken in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments and I want to show you this from his word as well.

Turn over to 2 Timothy 3 and we'll read a few longer passages than I had planned but I want you to see it. Paul is writing to Timothy, his child in the faith, and he says in verse 15, he said, "from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Inspired by God, stated differently: breathed out from God. God has spoken in the Scriptures and it's sufficient. It's sufficient, verse 15, to give men wisdom that leads to salvation. It's a sufficient for you and I to live productive Christian lives and to respond to every opportunity and every trial that comes to our lives. The Scriptures are adequate to help us live godly lives in the midst of whatever he providentially puts in our way.

Look, in chapter 4, verse 1. I want you to have a sense of the solemnity of the things that we're discussing here; a sense of the magnitude of the importance of these things, the holiness, the grandeur of them, that these are not things to trifle with. Look at what Paul says to Timothy in chapter 4, verse 1, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge," there is that word "judgment" again, pretty interesting, huh? God has spoken, and judgment is right alongside for rejecting it in creation. God has spoken in conscience, and judgment is right alongside it when men deny it. God has spoken in the Scriptures and Paul says there is judgment that surrounds this. There is a holy solemnity to this. "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

Now look at verse 3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." Beloved, we just have to understand the reality of what's going on around us and not think that the predominance of an atheistic worldview in our midst is somehow a sign that God's testimony is weak or defective or not compelling. The reason men reject it is not because it's lacking, it's because they have deliberately turned their minds away from it. They prefer myths to truths and that makes a difference for you and me because it gives us a grid, it gives us a filter, it gives us a prism through which to understand the hostility of the world toward the God that we think is so obviously revealed in creation, conscience and the Canon.

Beloved, what I want you to have deepened in your heart, what I want you to feel the weight of in a good healthy fear of God sort of way, you know, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," is that we have the responsibility and we have the privilege and we have the prerogative as the elect of God, as those that Christ has redeemed with his own blood, to be the ones who give voice to the testimony of God that he has made clear in Scripture. We have the privilege and prerogative of standing on God's side in these things and saying, "No, what you're saying is false. God has spoken. God has made himself known and your refusal to believe it is a morally culpable act of defiance." So we give voice to that, not from a position of fear and being intimidated and fearful that men

won't believe us, we're strong and courageous because we realize that God has spoken and what else can we do but also speak the things that God has said after his own word. We will not be intimidated by the spirit of this age. We won't.

Now, turn over to 2 Peter. I won't tell you where that tangent started. It started a long ways back. 2 Peter 1:20, says this again, "Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit," what? "Spoke from God." God has spoken. God has spoken in the Canon. He has spoken in conscience. He has spoken in creation. Over 1,500 years through 40 different authors who wrote 66 books as they now stand in our English Bible, God has spoken in the Bible. The same God who created the heavens, the same God who speaks in conscience, has spoken in the 66 books of the Bible. I don't know that there's any way to actually prove this but I think the most vocal critics of the Bible are probably the ones who have read it the least.

Now, when you consider these different levels at which God has spoken, you realize that he has been speaking clearly for thousands of years. We hold in our hands a book that in some places is 3,500 years old. Still standing strong. Still the most widely published book in the world, despite the efforts of men to eradicate it. And maybe we could wrap it up by taking our eyes up to verse 16 of 2 Peter 1. Beloved, if you've been weak in faith, if you found yourself struggling with doubt, confused by maybe the remnants of a secular education; confused by people who have a sharper mind and are quicker with their tongues than you are maybe and you get in an argument and you find that it's hard to compete with some of these things, I want you to look at verse 16 very carefully. Peter says, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The apostles saw Christ with their own eyes. They saw him transfigured. They saw his miracles. By the way, we're going to talk about this aspect of it more on Sunday. I'm really excited about that too. But what I want to see is that as Christians, as God-fearing people, we are not following cleverly devised tales that someone made up. We're not following the myths of old women that they concocted around a pot of stew one time centuries ago. We are following the truth with undeniable clarity. We are following what is true and we base this not on anything in ourselves, but all in a manner in which God has spoken clearly and undeniably.

Our faith does not disregard reality. God has revealed himself. It all boils down to this, beloved: God has made himself known. That's why we believe in him. He has made himself known and he has made himself known in so many different realms, realms that are in some respects, speaking very loosely here, unrelated to one another. My conscience, in a sense, is unrelated to the creation around me. The Scriptures are something distinct from creation. But in every realm, plus the other things that we're going to say next week, I'm not even giving it all to you tonight, there is this consistent testimony with cross verification from different realms speaking to the same fundamental reality that we uphold and proclaim. That's why we believe in him and the so-called atheists, the guys who make millions going out on lecture tours, telling people, mark it, mark it for sure, there is a reason why they do this, it's because there's a lot of money to

be made telling people what they want to hear that there really isn't a God after all. There is a lot of money to be made doing that but the atheists who are doing that, the so-called atheists, they are the ones living in fantasy. They're the ones living in denial.

Look over at Psalm 14 and we'll come close to closing with this. Psalm 14. There is a famous debate involving Greg Bahnsen who is no longer with us but has gone on to heaven; he debated with an atheist and he closed his debate with this verse. It's a great moment in the history of debate. But Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God." What did he find? "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one. Do all the workers of wickedness not know, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call upon the LORD? There they are in great dread, For God is with the righteous generation. You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, But the LORD is his refuge." The atheists intimidate, they try to anyway, but our days of being intimidated by that are over because we fear God more than we fear man whose breath is in his nostrils. So, beloved, be encouraged, be strong and be very courageous and teach your kids to be strong and courageous as well and help them to understand why we believe, not just that we believe.

Now, I promised you five reasons why we believe in God. I've given you three and the last two are even more compelling but they're going to have to wait till next week so I hope you can come back. I'm going to pray here and then I'll take a few questions before we go if you have any questions by way of follow-up or clarification. I'm happy to address that, okay? But let's bow in prayer and thank God for an hour that went all too quickly.

*Father, we do want to thank you for your grace and mercy and, Lord, these are such momentous issues because they speak to the fact that there is a God. You are he and we are not at liberty to deny your existence and, Father, men are not at liberty to deny you; it's a morally culpable act for which they will be held accountable. "It's a fearsome thing to fall into the hands of of the living God," and, Lord, we thank you that by grace, by your mercy, by bringing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have delivered us from that state that we ourselves once shared in: being deceived, enslaved by various lusts, doubting your word and calling into question and even cursing your name. Father, we believe in response to what you have done. We believe in response to the fact that you have spoken and, Father, as your people here in Truth Community fellowship, Lord, we're not going to stick our fingers in our ears anymore. We're not going to cover up our ears and close our eyes and stamp our feet and pretend that you haven't spoken because you have and, Lord, it's our desire collectively as a people and individually as men and women and children, it's our desire to be obedient to what you have revealed, to be submissive to it, to love you and to honor you and to proclaim the greatness of your character as long as you give us breath.*

*So we pray that you would help us to that end and, Father, I pray for some who may be here who yet have not come to faith in Christ. Who perhaps are struggling through these issues. Who have had a lot of conversations maybe with loved ones and yet somehow, Father, they're still wandering in darkness. Lord, I pray that you would place your hand upon them with great power even tonight and lead them to Christ. Father, don't leave them wandering around in their confusion and uncertainty any longer but just as you have been gracious to me in my darkness, as you have been gracious to so many in this room, Father, I pray that you would extend that grace just a little further. Bring that one by your hand to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that they might come out of their rejection of your word, the rejection of your self-testimony and humble their hearts before Christ and receive him by faith for the forgiveness of their sins. Father, help us to be a body of believers that are courageous and fearless in upholding this in the face of a hostile world, in season and out of season. Each one of us, Father, mark us, help us, so that we would be exactly what you want us to be in proclaiming and upholding the greatness of your being and the greatness of your word. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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